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SUBJECT: BOTSWANA: POLITICAL UPDATES FOR JULY 2009.

Botswana: African Union fails the continent

1. (U) Botswana's Vice-President Mompoti Merafhe and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Phandu Skelemani attended the African Union (AU) Summit held in Sirte, Libya July 1-3 and described it as "a near circus." Addressing a press conference in Gaborone after returning from Libya, the two ministers said that "nothing from summit can benefit Botswana." The theme of the summit was "Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security," but Merafhe and Skelemani complained that there were very few discussions or new initiatives pertaining to the topic. Rather, delegates were "given wrong documents despite our complaints and we were not able to debate systematically." (Note: The inability to debate and discuss items is antithetical to long standing tradition of community discussion and consent in Botswana. End Note.)

2. (U) The two ministers also said that Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi is a difficult person to work with and that he does not accommodate other people's views. For instance, VP Merafhe said Gaddafi did not allow the summit to debate the issue of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, for whom the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued a warrant of arrest for human rights abuses. Merafhe stated that Gaddafi made a unilateral decision that the AU would oppose the arrest warrant. This decision stifled the debate and at the meeting only two countries, Chad and Botswana, publically announced their position on the matter, which is that Bashir should go to the ICC to clear his name. In regards to the formation of the United States of Africa, another idea piloted by Libyan President Gaddafi, Botswana has said that it does not feel that Africa is ready to establish the United States of Africa. Further, Merafhe stated that if a United States of Africa is formed Botswana would not join for years or "perhaps generations."

3. (SBU) Comment: The willingness of Botswana to speak out against the AU is very rare on the African continent. Typically, African countries keep any issues among them out of the public eye. This willingness to speak out against leaders, policies and now meetings that the GOB sees as ineffective is becoming increasingly common, but is coming at a price as other African countries are beginning to view Botswana as a troublemaker and far too outspoken. End Comment.

Critics Allege Khama Wants to Create a Dynasty

4. (U) A local newspaper has alleged that President Ian Khama wants to remove Daniel Kwelagobe from the chairmanship of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) because Kwelagobe is against "automatic succession" in the presidency. Kwelagobe has said that automatic succession is no longer acceptable and must be reviewed. In Botswana the president is not directly elected by the voters, but is instead chosen by the Parliament after each general election. The term "automatic succession" refers to the practice in which has evolved in Botswana whereby the sitting President resigns in the last year of his term and hands over the reins of power to his Vice

President. The new President thus "automatically" assumes office for one year before facing a general election, at which point given his incumbency he can presumably retain the presidency should his party retain the Parliamentary majority. Since the Botswana Democratic Party has been in power since 1966, there has been no real challenge to this practice.

¶5. (SBU) Some within the BDP believe that President Khama wants to have his cousin Dikgakangamatso Seretse, currently Minister of Defense, Justice and Security, or Kitso Mokaila, Minister of Environment and Tourism to ascend to the Vice Presidency in 2009. They also claim that once Khama's new VP becomes president in 2018, President Khama's brother, Tshekedi, currently the MP for Serowe North West should become Vice President. This would allow Tshekedi Khama to eventually become President himself, following the tradition of "automatic succession."

¶6. (U) BDP chairman Kwelagobe has gone on record to say that the law allowing automatic succession must be repealed. (Note: it is actually a constitutional provision as amended in 1997 that allows succession, not an ordinary law. End note.) President Khama is now campaigning for Tebelelo Seretse, the former head of the BDP women's wing, to be elected to replace Kwelagobe as party chairperson at the BDP Congress July 18-21. Tebelelo, it is argued, would not disturb Khama's alleged grand plan to create a "Khama dynasty."

No Independent Inquiry into Killings

¶7. (U) The Minister for Defense, Justice and Security Dikgakangamatso Seretse has told Parliament that there is no need to set up an independent inquiry to investigate extra-judicial killings by state security forces. This statement was made in response to a question

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by Akanyang Magama, the MP for Gaborone South (BNF party), as to whether the "increasing number of extra-judicial killings of suspects by state security forces necessitated an independent inquiry to restore confidence in the law enforcement agencies."

¶8. (U) 14 suspected criminals have been shot and killed by security agents since April 2008 (the start of the Khama administration). The latest killing, which is still under investigation, involved John Kalafatis, 33, who was shot by security agents on May 13. No security agents have yet been brought before the courts in any of the 14 incidents. The Minister said if there is any drop in the public's confidence in law enforcement, it is due to the general increase in crime. He said existing legal processes can be used to address the alleged extra-judicial killings. Seretse explained that police have different units through which they can investigate all the cases. The GOB is also in the process of establishing a National Human Rights Institution to deal broadly with human rights questions.

¶9. (SBU) Comment: While Minister Seretse says that the drop in public confidence is due to a general increase in crime, Embassy officers have heard contacts express concerns that the Government has not been handling the Kalafatis investigation in a transparent manner. This does not mean that it is not being handled properly, but that there is a lack of openness which breeds suspicion. This coupled with the number of shootings have led some people to ask whether the problem is a lack of training for Directorate of Intelligence and Security Services (DISS) officers, a view by the DISS that they are above the law, or an improper use of DISS officers to perform duties customarily performed by, and in the past assigned, to the Botswana Police Force. End Comment.

Nolan